

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 DAMASC 08790 271553Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SSM-03
IO-13 ACDA-07 /079 W
-----271554Z 000836 /53

R 271512Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1081
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 8790

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR SY LE PLO
SUBJ: PRESIDENT ASAD COMMENTS ON LEBANON AND PLO TO AMERICAN
VISITOR

1. DECEMBER 27 PRESS CARRIED FRONT-PAGE REPORT OF
MEETING BETWEEN PRES ASAD AND U.S. STATE LEGISLATOR
FROM COLORADO, DR SAMIR ZAKHEM, PREVIOUS NIGHT. EMBASSY
CONTACTED ZAKHEM PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM DAMASCUS,
AND IN RATHER HURRIED AND ABBREVIATED TALK WHILE PACKING
ZAKHEM GAVE EMBOFF IMPRESSIONS OF CONVERSATION WITH ASAD.

2. ZAKHEM, WHO HIMSELF OF LEBANESE ORIGIN, SAID HE HAD
BEEN DISTURBED BY ASAD'S COMMENT THAT "DURING LEBANESE CRISIS
I CAME TO REALIZE HOW MUCH SYRIA AND LEBANON WERE ONE COUNTRY."
ZAKHEM SAID ASAD THEN REVIEWED FOR HIM HOW LEBANON HAD
BEEN CARVED OUT OF SYRIA IN 1919. ZAKHEM NOTED ALSO
THAT ASAD DID NOT INDICATE HOW LONG SYRIAN TROOPS WOULD
REMAIN IN LEBANON.

3. ASKED WHAT COMMENTS ASAD HAD MADE ABOUT PALE-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DAMASC 08790 271553Z

STINIANS, ZAKHEM SAID HE WAS LEFT WITH IMPRESSION THAT
YASIR ARAFAT MAY NOT BE OCCUPYING HIS PRESENT POSITION
MUCH LONGER. ASAD PRAISED SAIQA LEADER ZUHAYR MUHSIN
(WHOM ZAKHEM ALSO MET WITH) AND CONTRASTED HIM WITH
PFLP OF GEORGE HABASH, WHOM SYRIAN PRES. CHARACTERIZED
AS "MURDERERS." ACCORDING TO ZAKHEM, ASAD DESCRIBED

ALL PALESTINIANS WHO RESISTED SYRIAN POLICY IN LEBANON
AS "MURDERERS."

4. ZAKHEM EXPRESSED TO ASAD HOPE THAT PRES WOULD
RECEIVE INVITATION FROM PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER TO
VISIT U.S., AND ASKED FOR ASAD'S TENTATIVE REACTION IF
SUCH INVITATION PROFFERED. ASAD SAID HE DID NOT SEE
THIS AS LIKELY POSSIBILITY, BUT IF INVITED, "WHY SHOULD
I NOT GO? I WOULD BE HAPPY TO GO." ASAD AFFIRMED HIS
DESIRE FOR PROGRESS TOWARD SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL DURING
COMING YEAR. ZAKHEM SAID HE HAD ARRANGED APPOINTMENT
THROUGH FORMER CLASSMATE DR GEORGE JABBOUR WHO IS
NOW DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AT SYRIAN PRESIDENCY.

5. COMMENT: IT IS POSSIBLE THAT ZAKHEM -- WHO DISCOURSED WITH
ASAD IN ARABIC AND LARDED TALKS WITH PRAISE FOR SYRIAN
LEADER'S SUCCESS IN "SAVING LEBANON" -- MAY HAVE ELICITED
FROM ASAD MORE FRANK EXPRESSIONS OF HIS GENERAL
TREND OF THOUGHT ABOUT LEBANON THAN THIS NORMALLY CAUTIOUS
MAN USUALLY CONVEYS. ON OTHER HAND, ZAKHEM HIMSELF MAY BE
READING TOO MUCH INTO SOME HISTORICAL COMMENTS MADE BY
PRESIDENT. ZAKHEM SAID HE WOULD TRY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH
DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS UPON RETURN TO U.S.; EMBOFF
SUGGESTED HE CONTACT DRAPER OR CAROLAN IN NEA/ARN.
MURPHY

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, PALESTINIANS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, DEBRIEFINGS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976DAMASC08790
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760472-1212
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761213/aaaaalcu.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <04 OCT 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENT ASAD COMMENTS ON LEBANON AND PLO TO AMERICAN VISITOR
TAGS: PFOR, SY, LE, US, PLO, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (ZAKHEM, SAMIR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006